

- [I AM Navy Medicine](#)
- RSS :
- [Posts](#)
- [Comments](#)

[Navy Medicine](#)

World Class Care... Anytime, Anywhere

- [Home](#)
- [About](#)
- [Disclaimer](#)
- [Navy Medicine News](#)
- [Navy Medicine WebSite](#)
- [I AM Navy Medicine](#)

Type and hit enter to Search

Written on May 12, 2016 at 11:00 pm by [Navy Medicine](#)

[Pets Help Relieve Hospital Corps School Student Stress](#)

Filed under [Corpsman](#), [Leadership](#), [mental health](#) {[no comments](#)}

By Lt. Cmdr. Scott Adams, Navy Medicine Training Support Center (NMTSC) Chaplain



Almost every Wednesday night for well over a year, I have been bringing certified dogs and cats into the

barracks to be available as the students return from Hospital Corps School classes that day so they can “de-stress” by petting and playing with the charismatic and fully trained animals. To gain some perspective of why I started this program, one must understand part of my own journey.

Serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, I came home with a wonderful case of PTSD. Through my journey I have realized the comfort, calmness and joy that animals bring to my life (my family currently has 6 dogs and five cats... like I said a wonderful case of PTSD). I sleep better with our collie, Ladye, beside me. I know she'll bark if there's any “real” danger, so I can relax knowing she's got my back.

Coming to San Antonio to Navy Medicine Training Support Center (NMTSC), and seeing and hearing the struggles that both students and staff were having adjusting to this new and different environment, I began to wonder and pray how to help them. Encountering people who struggled with many of the same issues, I began to wonder if animals could bring peace to them as well.

In September 2014, I brought the first dog and cat to my office for Pet Therapy. My oldest daughter and I took Ladye, a rough collie, and Mooch, a Maincoon Manx, to the Multi-Purpose Room located in the Fraelish Hall barracks. Students began to pour in, excited to see the animals.

Much to my surprise students began to sit on the floor and wrap their arms around Ladye and sob. I heard statements like, “I haven't touch anything since before boot camp,” and, “I miss my dog!” The outpouring of emotions took me aback and broke my heart.

As the students interacted with both animals, I saw the impact that was being made. Students smiled and laughed and began to talk about their animals at home or their families. They opened up about struggles in class and life. A shift took place from student/officer to sailor/chaplain. It was a defining moment for my ministry here at NMTSC.

Over the past year and a half, we have written a Standard Operating Procedure for the NMTSC Human Animal Bonding Program. We've been able to add four additional dogs and four additional cats. Unfortunately, Mooch passed away in February. It was a very difficult period for me and my family. Even the office staff and students who had interacted with him expressed their sorrow and condolences.



In the beginning we held Pet Therapy once a month. With the addition of Bandit, a German Shepherd, and Gunner and Kessie, both Golden Retrievers, we are able to have dogs here every week. The cats are here only when I bring my dogs.

Now we hear statements like, “This is my favorite day of the week!” “Thanks Chaplain for bring your dogs.” “I lost my dog before boot camp.” And the list goes on.

On April 6, we were able to introduce the latest kittens, Panda and Maggie. The students flocked to the office when they heard the word “kittens.” The flood of bodies filled both offices with students circling the kittens, petting and playing with them. I think Panda and Maggie were a big hit.

Starting this program seems to have helped our students manage this transitional period between boot camp and the fleet. It has also given my family and me a chance to create a ministry together. My daughters not only had to train their dogs to earn their Canine Good Citizenship certification, but they interact with the students teaching them about each dog and cat’s breed. It’s a win-win in my book.

Last night I was talking with a student. I told him, “No matter how bad the day or the week is, seeing the joy on students’ faces when they pet the dogs brings joy to my heart as much as it does theirs.”

[← Next post](#) [Previous post →](#)

Navy Medicine tagged this post with: [chaplain](#), [Navy Medicine Training Support Center](#) Read 86 articles by [Navy Medicine](#)

Comments are closed

Navy Medicine Video

Navy Medicine



Navy Medicine is a global healthcare network of 63,000 Navy medical personnel around the world who provide high quality health care to more than one million eligible beneficiaries. Navy Medicine personnel deploy with Sailors and Marines worldwide, providing critical mission support aboard ship, in the air, under the sea and on the battlefield.

Navy Medicine Social Media